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THE KEY TO UNIT EFFECTIVENESS -- A SUPPORTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

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ABSTRACT

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The operational environment of the 21st Century will place tremendous stress upon future units and their leaders. Whether we end up with the current conceptualization of the FCS, a flattened organizational structure, and new operational concepts regarding "units of action" or not is, to a large degree, irrelevant. Good leaders and their ability to get the best from their units will remain the key combat multiplier. Over the past 30+ years there have been numerous studies, books and articles that have directly examined the topics of Army Culture, organizational climate, leadership and organizational effectiveness. Few have attempted to tie the four together; to examine the impact and relationship that leadership has on culture and organizational climate and the impact that culture and climate have on organizational effectiveness. Fewer still have focused on determining how best to select and train leaders capable of creating a supportive climate. Now is the time to start seriously addressing these findings … to move beyond survey results and get to the work of solving these issues. Some of these changes can be implemented easily, most will require a concerted effort by leaders at all levels. All center around selecting and then training leaders to develop and sustain supportive command climates within their organization.

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> There must be within our Army, a sense of purpose. There must be a willingness to march a little farther, to carry a heavier load, to step out into the dark and the unknown for the safety and well-being of others.
>
> —GEN Creighton Abrams

The operational environment of the 21st Century will place tremendous stress upon future units and their leaders. Whether we end up with the current conceptualization of the FCS, a flattened organizational structure, and new operational concepts regarding "units of action" or not is, to a large degree, irrelevant. Good leaders and their ability to get the best from their units will remain the key combat multiplier. The challenges facing future leaders will likely be exponentially more complex than those we face today. Building and sustaining organizationally effective units, whether they are combat; combat support; or combat service support, will remain a critical core competency for Army leaders of the 21st Century. Today we utilize many methods to measure unit effectiveness -- command inspections, readiness reports, Combat Training Center rotation results, and Army Training and Evaluation Programs to name just a few. All have proven effective; however, they are a snapshot in time -- a short-term measurement that is, by design, limited in scope. Another measure, not mentioned and often ignored, is organizational climate -- the "soft side" of unit effectiveness. Given the challenges we face in the near future, we cannot afford to ignore this critical component of unit effectiveness.

Over the past 30+ years there have been numerous studies, books and articles that have directly examined the topics of Army Culture, organizational climate, leadership and organizational effectiveness. Few have attempted to tie the four together; to examine the impact and relationship that leadership has on culture and organizational climate and the impact that culture and climate have on organizational effectiveness. Fewer still have focused on determining how best to select and train leaders capable of creating a supportive climate. Most of these studies and articles have found fundamental faults and have highlighted Army sponsored survey results to build their case and make their point. It is now time to start seriously addressing these findings …. to move beyond the survey results and get around to addressing the issues. The aforementioned results indicate decay in the organizational climate in a significant percentage of our units and organizations today. That percentage may be 25% or it may be as high as 75%, it is not worth arguing. If it affects only 20% of our units it must be addressed. The starting point for any potential solution begins with how we measure

organizational climate, what we do with those results, and how we train and select our senior tactical level leaders.

Throughout this paper I will refer to senior tactical commanders and local leadership. When I utilize either term, I am referring primarily to leaders at the brigade and battalion levels -- the ones that I believe have the greatest impact on organizational climate. I realize that division and corps level commanders are tactical leaders and that they do impact on organizational climate. However, I do not believe that their impact is nearly as great as those commanders at the battalion and brigade level. I also realize that there are a great many LTC and COL leaders of staffs and organizations that are not necessarily commanders. Although there impact is also less, I include them in my definition.

21ST CENTURY OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

In future operations, Army forces will depend upon a degree of joint interdependence that exceeds that exhibited in any previous operation. We will accomplish operational and tactical missions using forces that operate at higher tempos while distributed across much larger operational areas. These forces will often operate in non-contiguous areas of operations, in non-linear patterns that may appear bewilderingly complex to less advanced enemies. The strategic and operational mobility of Army forces will confront adversaries with dilemmas leading to swift and violent clashes that achieve our campaign objectives before the enemy is in position to achieve his. To a greater extent than any industrial age land force, Army forces will depend on support from the continental United States. At the same time, homeland security will shape strategic and operational requirements for the Army.[1]

Many facets of land warfare will remain constant in the midst of this shift from industrial age to future warfare. No matter how violent the blows that shatter the enemy's coherence, land forces will secure enduring change. The endurance of Army forces, their ability to function in close proximity to non-combatants, the requirement to enforce peace on a hostile or sullen population, or secure and dismantle the infrastructure that threatens regional or global security are all factors that continue to shape Army forces. But presupposing these abilities, Army forces must be formed, trained, and equipped to dominate in the environment of close combat. While the means of close combat have evolved, its nature remains the same as it was at Gettysburg or during Operation Anaconda—violent, emotionally searing, and intensely human. Ultimately, the success of Army units depends on human factors that are intangible - leadership, discipline, endurance, morale, cohesion, and courage.[2]

These words, taken from the Objective Force Battle Command Concept Paper, indicated a clear requirement to form, train and employ units that are capable of operations in an extremely complex environment. Increasingly, smaller and smaller units will be tried and tested as never before. Maximizing unit effectiveness, for every unit, will be an absolute necessity. The frontline on tomorrow's battlefield will be everywhere all at once and we must begin now to prepare to meet that reality. To their credit, the Army's senior civilian and military leadership have recognized this requirement and begun to take steps toward designing the equipment and organizational structures required to fight and dominate future opponents in this environment. Their efforts, to date, are remarkable. We have even begun to qualify the physical and metal capabilities required of future soldiers and the necessary attributes and characteristics of the officers that will lead them. However, it is not clear that today's leaders recognize and understand the requirement to create and sustain a supportive command climate. When asked, most leaders would say that their organizational leadership requirement is to "get my unit ready to go to war and take care of my equipment, my people, and their families". No argument; however, the key question is "what is the best way to achieve that end state?" Today's leaders, doctrine and leadership literature focus almost solely on the instrumental consequences of leadership -- the measurable outputs of a unit and how leaders influence that. Perhaps it is time to examine the other side of military leadership in greater detail -- how leaders influence the development and expression of culture and climate in their organization.[3] Identifying and training the desired traits, attributes, and characteristics of effective leadership is not enough. Obviously, we want units that perform to their full potential, but what is that and how do you achieve it? How does one go about harnessing the "power" of a unit or organization? How do you know when a unit is as effective as it can be? How does organizational climate impact effectiveness and how does a local leader impact organizational climate?

WHAT IS ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE?

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE, CLIMATE AND EFFECTIVENESS

In the Winter 1999 issue of *Orbis*, Don M. Snider clearly lays out one explanation of the distinct and powerful relationship between culture, climate and effectiveness. His argument, in part, is as follows:

"According to Schein's classic definition, and those of other theorists, military culture may be said to refer to the deep structure of organizations, rooted in the prevailing assumptions, norms, values, customs, and traditions which, collectively, over time, have created shared

individual expectations among the members. Culture includes both attitudes and behavior about what is right, what is good, and what is important among the members.

Closely associated with an organization's culture is its climate. In contrast to culture, organizational climate refers to environmental stimuli rooted in the organization's value system, such as rewards and punishments, communications flow, and operations tempo, which determine individual and team perceptions about the quality of working conditions. Climate is often considered to be alterable in the near term and largely limited to those aspects of the organizational environment of which members are aware.

Climate and culture are obviously related in complex ways, climate being an observable and measurable artifact of culture and considered by many to be one of the major determinates of organizational effectiveness."[4]

Military organizations are more likely to be effective in achieving both short and long-term goals if their climates are supportive and coherent. The link between quality of climate and unit productivity has been affirmed in both commercial and military settings. While factors other than climate -- such as the quantity and quality of available material and human resources -- affect productivity, it is unlikely that any organization can sustain a high level of effectiveness if its members describe their climate as non-motivational or hostile. Elements such as commitment to excellence, mutual trust, teamwork, and high morale that are hallmarks of a productive organization are reflected in assessments of unit climate.[5]

Forgive me one sport's analogy. Let's take college basketball as an example. Let's say that in any given year there are at least a hundred outstanding high school basketball players recruited by the top ten college basketball programs in the country. The talent level between these players is, generally, not significant. All 10 programs will generally get their "fair share" of the players they go after. So, theoretically each top 10 school get 10 of the very best high school basketball players every year to keep their program in the top 10 year after year. Why then are there schools that currently do this like Duke and Maryland; other schools that did it a few years back like Indiana and North Carolina, and schools that rarely do it? Could it have something to do with the local leadership and their ability to create and sustain a positive, supportive climate? Could it have something to do with Gary Williams, Coach K, Bobby Knight and Dean Smith?

THE LEADERS ROLE IN CREATING AND SUSTAINING A SUPPORTIVE CLIMATE

The role of the military leader, now and forever, is to get the job done. Leaders deal with organizations and equipment but, most importantly, they deal with soldiers. Strong leadership

has always been, and always will be, the key to getting it done. Desirable leadership competencies and the methods of training and inculcating them have changed little in the last 200+ years. Our current leadership doctrine clearly spells out what a leader must be, know, and do. The science of leadership is taught at every level of the Officer Education System and the art of leadership is practiced during every operational assignment. Although FM 22-100 dedicates only three pages to the subjects of culture and climate, it does clearly state that "organizational climate is directly attributable to the leader's values, skills and actions" and that "… it's the leader's behavior that has the greatest effect on organizational climate".[6]

All leaders in an organization have an impact on how people "feel" about being part of that organization. In fact, creating and sustaining a good climate is one of the most important - and sometimes overlooked - roles of leaders at the mid and upper levels of an organization. The collective impact of policies, projects, resources and leader behaviors cause individuals and teams to form certain perceptions about the organization. They may feel appreciated, informed, fairly treated, respected, trusted, and important to the organization; or they may see themselves as irrelevant, inconsequential, distrusted, and abused - or something in between. Probably the most important elements of a good climate are clarity of work objectives and standards, clarity of organizational expectations, open communications, and a sense of fair treatment.[7] Given the above, it is clear that the responsibility to create and maintain a supportive organizational climate lies squarely on the shoulders of the officer that leads that unit or organization. It is also evident that the largest single determinant of the prevailing climate will be his leadership style.

WHY IS ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE IMPORTANT?

IT CREATES COHESION AND BONDING

> "Men fight, essentially, because of each other. They fight because they grow to know each other, trust each other, and -- ultimately -- to love each other. They fight because they are unwilling to let each other down. That's teamwork, and that's why it is so critical. It's the foundation for survival and mission accomplishment in combat. Officers who do not clasp this concept to their heart -- or only pay lip service to it -- should not be permitted to command."
>
> —LTC Alfred Dibella, 1988

Cohesion is the existence of strong bonds of mutual respect, trust, confidence, and understanding among soldiers and leaders. A cohesive team is committed to the unit's goals and combat mission. Bonding, based on interpersonal relationships, is strengthened over time as the team endures hardships and shares experiences. These relationships provide a force which sustain soldiers in combat and cause them to risk their lives for each other.

There are two dimensions to the bonding process: horizontal and vertical. Horizontal bonding occurs as the team develops shared experiences and becomes interdependent. The more difficult bond to develop is between soldiers and their leaders. Vertical bonding occurs when the soldiers are confident in the leader's technical and tactical abilities, believe that the leader respects them and truly cares for them, and feel that the leader shares their dedication for mission accomplishment. Vertical bonding is imperative.[8]

"Cohesion is a measurement of a unit's morale, its willingness to perform a mission and to fight. This is a critical element with respect to the connection between organizational climate and the operational effectiveness of military units. According to Burk,

> Military cohesion refers to the feeling of identify and comradeship that soldiers hold for those in the immediate military unit, the outgrowth of face-to-face or primary (horizontal) group relations.

Behavior studies since the Second World War have convincingly shown that, in the main, soldiers do not fight cohesively because of ideology or patriotism. Rather, Burk agues that the key factor is loyalty to other members of the unit:

> [It] was the capacity of the soldiers' immediate unit, their company and platoon to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, affection and esteem. These factors increased in importance as war genuinely threatened soldiers' sense of security and recognition of worth as human beings. So long as these needs were met, soldiers believed themselves part of a powerful group and felt responsible, even empowered, to fight for their group's well being. However, when these needs were not met, soldiers felt alone and unable to protect themselves; the unit disintegrated and stopped fighting[9]

I believe that cohesion and bonding is so very important simply because it is, in essence, the very glue that holds a unit together when the going get tough. Whether it is the rigors of combat or during a tough CTC rotation, cohesion and bonding will keep a unit focused on the mission and task at hand. It will allow individual soldiers and their leaders to focus on the good of the entire organization rather than the survival and accomplishments of the individual. With it, missions get accomplished and soldiers survive. Without it, there is chaos and confusion and individual survival becomes the overriding concern.

So why is it then that some units have it and others don't? Because of local leadership and their ability to build and foster bonding and cohesion or; conversely, their ability to inhibit it.

In our institutional education system we teach that cohesion and bonding are “good things” but no where do we teach how to foster, build, and sustain it. This skill is very much left to “genetics” and operational experiences. Most of our officers have some experience playing organized sports in high school or collage; most know what cohesion and bonding are. However, how many of them were team captains and responsible for fostering it? Recognizing it and knowing how to create it are two entirely different things. So how do we teach it and how do we make sure that our leaders of 2015 have it?

IT INSTILLS THE WILLINGNESS TO SACRIFICE

The willingness to sacrifice is defined as “the willing donation of personal comfort, ambition, or safety (risking injury or death) in order to accomplish the mission and do what my soldiers, unit and country need of me”. Sacrifice also includes:

- the pursuit of excellence
- enduring repetition
- going the extra mile
- staying the extra hour
- self discipline
- self denial
- enduring optimism, despite adversity
- disciplined, obedient performance of duty, despite difficulty or danger[10]

As General Creighton Abrams said, “There must be, within out Army, a sense of purpose …. a willingness to march a little farther, to carry a heavier load, to step into the dark for the safety and well-being of others.[11]

The willingness to sacrifice sounds like something that is only required in combat but it is much more than the willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice. It is a quality that is important each and every day, whether in garrison, the field, or in combat. It is as simple as the willingness to make the extra effort to stay late and ensure the training for tomorrow is squared away, while others go home, to something as complicated as the willingness to put your life at risk for the good of your fellow soldiers. It is, in essence, the willingness to do the right thing when no one is looking regardless the personal cost or gain. All great leaders have it -- Bradley, Abrams, Ridgeway, Marshall to name just a few -- but where did they get it? Was this quality taught to them?

There are countless examples of a willingness to sacrifice throughout our history and just as many good quotes describing it. Our educational system does an adequate job describing

this quality and pointing our relevant examples of it. It is, I believe, very much a genetic trait that can be, to a certain extent, learned. Maybe great leaders are born with a high degree of it and that is what makes them great. I do believe that we are all born with a certain degree of it and that this trait, give proper education and mentorship, can be nurtured and grown over time. We may not all grow up to be a Bradley or Patton, great leaders, but we certainly can all grow up to be a good one!

IT INSTILLS AND PRESERVES THE WARRIOR ETHOS

The term "Warrior Ethos" has become very popular. It comes up in almost every discussion of Peacekeeping Operations and their "cost" with regard to the readiness of the Army to meet its fundamental mission. It also comes up in every discussion involving the integration of female soldiers into formerly all male MOS's and during discussions about gender integrated basic training. So then, what exactly is warrior ethos?

According to FM 22-100 it refers to the professional attitudes and beliefs that characterize the American soldier. At its core, the warrior ethos grounds itself on the refusal to accept failure. It goes on to state that it is developed through discipline, commitment to Army values, and the knowledge of the Army's proud heritage. The warrior ethos makes clear that military service is much more than just another job; the purpose of winning the nation's wars calls for total commitment.[12] In its simplest form I believe that the warrior spirit can be adequately described as "good attitude coupled with a commitment to excellence".

We all know soldiers we would describe as having a warrior ethos. They tend to walk a little taller and exude a certain degree of confidence. They are the ones we always turn to when the going gets tough; the "horse" we ride to death. They are the ones soldiers look to for leadership and guidance whether they are in that leader's chain of command or not. Additionally, and more importantly, we all have seen units that exude a warrior ethos. Units that have a positive attitude about everything they do and that are committed to excellence at everything they attempt, no matter the cost and sacrifice. They are the units that are always given the tough mission. They lead the way during every movement to contact at a CTC, they are first up during the annual command inspection, and they will be the first across the LD during the next war because we know that they will succeed. Obviously, this is a desirable characteristic so why is it that only a small percentage have it?

I believe that the answer is as simple as the leadership styles and difference between units and their leaders. I have found an old adage confirmed everywhere I go - "units take on the personality and characteristics of their leader". It has always amazed me how quickly this

happens and how complete the change is. So, if we want units with a warrior ethos, we may not need to look much further than the local leadership of those units. This is probably just a little too simplistic but it is a critical first step toward building units of attitude and commitment.

A caution about attitude. There are obviously two types: good and bad. The attitude I am talking about has to be seen, not heard. It will become apparent when you see how a unit looks in formation, on the parade ground, or on a live fire range. Regardless of where they are you will see it in their actions and you will see it when you look into the eyes of the soldiers. Beware the unit and/or leader that go out of their way to show and tell you how good they are!

Once again the operable question becomes one of how. How do we go about training leaders to create and sustain the warrior ethos in themselves and in their units? You create a positive attitude the old fashion way -- by making the unit better than anyone else on the block! You train hard to tough standard and you maintain strict discipline within the unit. In essence, you make the unit great and then you convince them that they are even better than they think they are. You create ownership of that greatness in a way that they never want to give that reputation up. No matter the task at hand, they must believe that they have been trained to accomplish it to an equal or greater standard than any other unit. And when they succeed, and they will, you must celebrate that accomplishment and reward them for it. I believe it is as simple and as complicated as that. I also believe that the method is not much different for creating the warrior ethos in an individual leader.

IT CREATES TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

This is an area that has received a lot of press lately. It was one of the primary issues cited for the so-called “great captain exodus” during the late 1990’s and it was a primary issue identified during the Army’s Chief of Staff Leadership Survey conducted at CGSC in 1998. I think most would agree that it is a “two-way street” but what exactly is it and what does our doctrine have to say about it?

Although FM 22-100 talks extensively about both trust and confidence, it never clearly defines them. This is understandable as the meanings of these terms tend to be common knowledge … or are they? Webster defines them as (words in all caps indicate a common synonym):

- Trust (vb): 1) to place confidence; to DEPEND, 2) to be confident; to HOPE, 3) to ENTRUST, 4) to permit to stay or go on to do something without any fear or misgiving; 5) to rely on or on the truth of, to BELIEVE.

- Confidence (n): 1) TRUST, RELIANCE; 2) SELF-ASSURANCE, BOLDNESS; 3) a state of trust or intimacy.

When viewed in these terms it becomes easy for me to see why many of our junior officers are citing trust and confidence as a current (and past) problem. In fact, without some fairly dramatic steps, it will remain an issue indefinitely. This is not a self-correcting problem … it will not simply go away on its own.

So what are some things that cause a subordinate to lack trust and confidence in their senior tactical leadership? There are numerous examples pointed out in countless studies, articles, and research documents. Things such as: micromanagement, lack of communications, "knee jerk" reactions to bad news, risk aversion, centralization, "command" by email, taking the easy way out, careerism, ticket punching, rampant cynicism, and on and on and on. These are not my words, these are the words used by our junior officers to describe today's environment as they see it. They may not be totally correct and they may only be seeing half the picture; but, in this case perceptions are more important than the truth!

This issue has been around for a long time - sometimes it is more evident than at others - but it always has and, to a certain degree, always will be with us. If we are going to get a handle on it, and we better, the place to start is with local leadership - at the battalion and brigade levels. A positive and supportive command climate will minimize the problem. Left to itself this issue alone threatens our very culture more than anything else. There are no institutional solutions; chain teaching will not fix this one. We must have strong local leaders that can effectively address and eliminate the symptoms of these issues. That is not to say that our Army's senior leadership does not have an important role. We cannot get this issue under control without their strong support. In this case, as in many others, weak or non-existent support from the top will kill any attempt by lower level leaders to effectively address trust and confidence.

IT FACILITATES EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

FM 22-100 states that communications probably falls into four broad categories: speaking, reading, writing, and listening.[13] It is intuitive that if you want to get soldiers to do what you want them to do you must communicate that direction to them. It is also obvious that this can be done in a myriad of ways, everything from written SOP's, verbal guidance, the statement of commander's intent, counseling, written policies, regulations and so on. As I read the finding of many major reports that identify communications as a major issue in today's Army, I am convinced it is not the "what" … it is the "how"! I do not believe our junior officers are saying

that we are not talking to them; I believe that our junior officers are saying we are not talking with or listening to them.

Throughout the formal education process there is a great deal of emphasis on improving writing, speaking and reading skills but rarely, if ever, are we taught to become an effective listener. Additionally, the speaking skills we learn are predominately geared toward "briefing" and much less so on speaking -- or communicating -- on an individual basis. All of us remember the many lessons that point out that for effective communications to occur there must be a speaker, a listener, and a basic understanding of the message being conveyed. Where do we learn how to do that effectively? In most cases it is left to practical experience; a process that is not monitored, evaluated or focused effectively. In other words, we leave it to hope. We hope that a young officer has or develops the ability to effectively communicate - speak and listen - to his soldiers individually and as a unit. We also leave to hope the desire that this ability grows and matures as the officer moves up in rank and leadership responsibilities. In this case, as in all others, hope may work sometimes but it is not an effective method.

Don't get me wrong, the ability to effective communicate through written products and through briefings is critically important for senior leaders. However, the skill to effectively communicate one-on-one or in small groups is equally critical. You cannot develop a supportive command climate if you cannot effectively communicate, formally and informally, with your subordinates. Without a supportive command climate there is no way your subordinates will communicate with you; the two are mutually supportive and, in this case, the chicken and the egg arrive together!

AN INDICATION OF SOME PROBLEMS

In February 2000 GEN Shinseki chartered the Army Training and Leader Development Panel. They assessed training and leader development doctrine and practices to determine their applicability and suitability for the Interim Force. The panel also worked to determine the characteristics and skills required of Information Age Army leaders who must conduct strategically responsive operations in tomorrow's full spectrum battlespace. Over the course of a year they analyzed existing policies, directives and literature in addition to interviewing more than 13,000 soldiers and family members.

Their findings indicate fundamental issues in the areas of culture and climate as well as the ability of the officer corps to manage and shape each. In simpler terms, a leadership issue. This should have come as no surprise; these issues are not new. Studies released in 1970 and

again in 2000 indicate similar findings - obviously these problems are not self-correcting. The major findings, relevant to organizational climate, of the ATLDP-Officer were:[14]

While fully recognizing the requirements associated with a career in the Army, officers consistently made comments that indicate the Army Culture *(and climate … my addition) is* out of balance and outside their Band of Tolerance. They cited the following examples:

- We are trying to do too much with available resources, too many non-mission and late taskings, too many directed training events, and senior leader "can-do" attitudes that put too much on the plate. This impacts predictability in their professional and personal lives and the lives of their families.
- The Army expects more commitment from officers and their families than it currently provides.
- Top-down training directives and strategies combined with brief leader development experiences for junior officers leads to a perception that micromanagement is pervasive. They do not believe they are being afforded sufficient opportunity to learn from their own decisions and actions.
- There is diminishing, direct contact between seniors and subordinates. This is evidenced by unit leaders who are often not the primary trainers, leaders who are often not present during training, leaders who are focused up rather than down, and leaders who are unwilling to turn down excessive and late taskings. This diminishing contact does not promote cohesion and inhibits trust.

In American Military Culture in the Twenty First Century, the Center for Strategic and International Studies team - composed of Center staff and outside experts - reported on its two-year research effort. The team analyzed existing literature, reviewed survey data from each of the services, sponsored two major conferences, held 125 focus-group discussions, and surveyed 12,500 men and women in operational military units and selected headquarters. Among its major findings were:[15]

- Fundamental professional values are remarkable strong but are under stress from several different sources.
- Strong local leadership, which is not uniformly in place today, is essential for maintaining the vibrant organizational climates essential for operational effectiveness in the twenty-first century. Present leader development and promotion systems, however, are not up to the task of consistently identifying and advancing highly competent leaders.
- Circumstances often require military leaders to make decisions when the value of loyal responsiveness to authority, on one hand, appears to conflict with the values of loyal

dissent and candor, on the other. Conflicts among professional values, not unique to the military, if not properly and openly resolved in each case, can erode trust within the armed forces.

Finally, the 1970 Study on Military Professionalism was conducted by the U.S. Army War College at the direction of the Army Chief of Staff. The study began on 21 April 1970 and the report was submitted to the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel on 30 June 1970. It dealt with the heart and soul of the Officer Corps of the Army. Its subject matter -- involving ethics, morality, and professional competence -- was filled with emotional overtones. The major findings of the study related to organizational climate were:[16]

- There are widespread and often significant differences between the ideal ethical/moral/professional standards of the Army -- as epitomized by Duty-Honor-Country -- and the prevailing standards.
- The Army rewards system focuses on the accomplishment of short term, measurable, and often trivial tasks, and neglects the development of those ethical standards which are essential to a healthy profession.
- The most frequently recurring specific themes describing the variance between ideal and actual standards of behavior in the Officer Corps include: selfish, promotion-oriented behavior; inadequate communication between junior and senior, distorted or dishonest reporting of status, statistics, or officer efficiency; technical or managerial incompetence; disregard for principles but total respect for accomplishing even the most trivial mission with zero defects; disloyalty to subordinates; senior officers setting poor standard of ethical/professional behavior.
- The communication between junior and senior is inadequate; the junior feels neglected and the senor is often out of touch with reality. Junior officers believe that lieutenant colonels and colonels in particular do not listen to them; they talk “to” rather than “with” them.
- The present climate is not conducive to retaining junior officers who place strong emphasis on principle rather than expediency.
- Variances between ideal and actual standards are condoned, if not engendered, by certain Army polices regarding officer evaluation, selection for promotion, career concepts and assignment policies, and information reporting systems.
- The present climate is not self-correcting, and because of the nature and extent of the problem, change must be credibly instituted and enforced by the Army’s top leadership.

- Correcting the climate will require more than superficial transitory measures. The climate cannot be corrected by admonitions. Concrete modification of the systems of reward and punishment to support adherence to the time-honored principles of an Army officer is required.

The good news is that all three studies came to the conclusion that fundamental professional values are remarkably strong. This finding is not trivial -- if that were not the case the very survival of the profession would be in doubt! The findings that most clearly indicate a fundamental problem with regard to the creation and sustainment of supportive climates are:

- At least several current practices are out of balance with what is generally accepted as "cultural norms".
- The communications between most superiors and subordinates is, at best, ineffective and, at worst, nonexistent.
- The current OES does an inadequate job of preparing officers for leadership in the 21st Century.
- Strong local leadership, which is not uniformly in place today, is essential for maintaining the vibrant organizational climates essential for operational effectiveness in the twenty-first century.

At this point it is important to point out that the Army's leadership, both military and civilian, have already directed efforts aimed at addressing many of the issues identified in the ATLDP-O findings. Their efforts are substantial and indicate that they are listening and acting to address the concerns of the field. High School Senior stabilization, 4-day training holidays in conjunction with national holidays, moving all battalion and brigade level changes of command to a summer cycle, the effort to man all divisions at 100%, the push toward privatization of family housing, the rewriting of FMs 25-100 and 25-101, and the current initiative to move to a unit rotation system all indicate a honest effort to address many of these issues.

However, their efforts alone will not be enough. The findings I have highlighted, deal directly with quality leadership at the unit and organizational level. The issue is not if we posses fine leaders -- we do! The issue is that we are not doing all that we can to train and then select the officers best suited to command and lead our soldiers. Note that I did not say we are not selecting the "best officers"; rather that we may not be selecting the "best officers suited for command and leadership".

WHAT MUST BE DONE

MAKE MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF COMMAND CLIMATE SURVEYS

How can such a vague concept be assessed and how should we go about it? Actually, there are many ways to assess the organizational climate of a military unit. Many would argue that good leaders should be able to get a sense simply by "walking around" and talking with the soldiers of the unit. Others would say that it can be measured by the units "output" -- how well it maintains its equipment and facilities, conducts training, and cares for its people. Still others would argue that it can be accurately measured by the quality of the leaders and the discipline of the soldiers. Regardless, all these methods provide measurements that are generally not quantifiable and are, therefore, not useful if the goal is to identify trends and/or issues between units or over time.

One of the best tools we have for assessing an organizational climate is the command climate survey. There are many such surveys in existence and as many different methods for using them as there are units in the Army. At present, there is no "standardized" survey used by the US Army to gauge the organizational climate nor, when and if a survey is conducted, are the results recorded and reported in any reliable manner. I believe that this must change. The command climate survey is probably the best tool we have available to judge and quantify the quality of organizational leadership and we should take advantage of it as an institution.

First, I believe that serious consideration should be given to the creation of a standardized survey that measures command climates in all battalions and brigades throughout the Army. Most authorities on the subject believe that any such survey - at a minimum - include a measurement of: [17]

- Value Reinforcement - organizational values clarified and nourished routinely.
- Vision - an understanding of what the organization can and should be.
- Commitment - dedication to organizational mission and values.
- Goals and Priorities - knowing clearly the performance goals and task priorities.
- Integrity and Trust - a prevailing sense of honest dealing and mutual trust.
- Latitude/Power - appropriate latitude and authority in doing the job.
- Open Channels - systematic and informal communications up, down and across.
- Policy Coherence - the totality of policies and practices being congruent with organizational goals and priorities.
- Measurements and Feedback - organizational effectiveness assessed and reported reliably and constructively.

- Team Building - cooperative group work routinely supported.
- Performance Appraisal/Reward - individual and team performance assessed and rewarded effectively.
- Personal Development - plans and programs for growing future leaders.
- Resource Accessibility - essential materials or funds obtainable.
- Junk Destruction - opportunities to eliminate “dumb stuff” and whitewash.
- Pace and Stress - reasonable levels of activity and demands.
- Humor - timely injections of lightheartedness and fun.

Second, I believe that this survey should become a recurring requirement. The initial survey should be completed within 120 days of an officer assuming command of the unit and be used as a “starting point” for him/her to work from. A second survey should be completed after one year in command. At that point it is almost certain that the leader has impacted the command climate and has had more than enough time to correct the deficiencies of the past commander. Finally, that the survey be given a third time within 30 days after the command tour ends. Giving it one final time after “the old man” is gone will eliminate any fear of retribution and ensure that the climate has not changed significantly since the new commander has arrived. This last survey may be the most accurate measurement of an individual leader’s ability to create and sustain a supportive climate.

Third, I believe that the results of these surveys should be cataloged and utilized to determine if they are the type of leader we want leading and commanding increasingly larger units in the future. I am not recommending a “central data bank” at PERSCOM where these reports are reviewed before every promotion and command board; although that is certainly possible. Rather, lets take a small, simple step first. Initially, make it a requirement that these reports be reviewed by raters and senior raters before completing an efficiency report. Then, after a few years, make changes to the current OER to incorporate an area for specific comments regarding an officers ability to create and sustain a supportive command climate. Gradual changes to our method of selecting officers for promotion and command is the most effective way to increase an awareness of the importance of creating and maintaining supportive organizational climates.

Are command climate surveys enough to determine the status of a unit’s organizational climate? Is there some other form of data that should be utilized to ensure that raters and senior raters have the complete and impartial picture?

UTILIZE 360-DEGREE EVALUATIONS

The concept of instituting a 360-degree evaluation is not new nor is it novel. Most successful corporations include, at some level, a type of 360-degree evaluation when determining who their senior supervisors and leadership will be and most have found it to be a very effective tool. The concept is also not new to the U.S. Army. It has been suggested on numerous occasions but has, for whatever reason, never gained acceptance or implemented. Reasons vary from cost to difficulty of implementation to inadequacy for the "Army model of leadership" to fear that it will become a way for subordinates and peers to "get back" at the officer being evaluated. Whatever the reason, I firmly believe that it is time to reconsider the value of incorporation of a 360-degree evaluation into our current system.

The how is not nearly as important as the fact that we do it. That we give our subordinates and peers some degree of say in who the most effective leaders are and who the leaders are that get things accomplished often at their expense. I am certainly not recommending that we throw out our current evaluation system and replace it with a 360-degree system, rather just that we use it to supplement our current system.

Our current system is based solely on the judgment and recommendations of two people, the rater and senior rater (possibly a third if there is an intermediate rater). These judgments and recommendations, taken over time, make up an officer's file and largely determine whether or not he or she is qualified for promotion and/or command. These judgments are extremely important and should continue to be the primary selection factors. However, they do not paint the entire picture! They are largely a measurement of an officer's ability to get the job done and produce results. The primary emphasis is on short term organizational output with much less emphasis on how that officer went about achieving that output. We have all heard stories of "toxic" leaders - leaders who accomplish great things but at the expense of their soldiers. Their soldiers despise coming to work in the morning and produce great results more out of fear than commitment. They are willing to hold on because the "old man" won't be here for very much longer and hopefully the next guy will be better. But what happens when one toxic leader is followed by another? The answer is simple -- they decide to leave the Army because they become convinced that continue service is just not worth the pain of working for these types of individuals. Given the price we, as an institution, pay for this style of leaders why does it still exist?

It exists because <u>we get what we reward</u>! There is no mechanism for our subordinates to provide input on the "how" of organization output. Tremendous results are great - but not at the expense of our soldiers. There are numerous examples and studies that point out how to

implement an evaluation system that incorporates 360-degree evaluations. My main recommendation here is that the Army's most senior leadership commission a study with the goal of identifying the best way to incorporate this tool into our current system. The results could be compiled at PERSCOM and looked at by command boards or they could be maintained at the local level and only used to assist the rater and senior rater with their input. It could include all subordinates and peers or it could include subordinates down two grades only. It could be given only to the rated officer, for professional development, up to the grade of O4, or it could be utilized to select and promote future leaders from commissioning. The point, right now, is not so much how we do it just that we do it! Our current system is a good one but I believe that it can be better. We must do all that we can to ensure we are selecting and rewarding those officers capable of building and sustaining supportive organizational climates.

Finally, if we are going to use 360-degree evaluations to help select officers for promotion and command opportunities, we owe them an educational system that gives them the necessary knowledge and tools to develop and sustain supportive command climates.

REFORM OES TO ADDRESS ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

There is absolutely no way that an officer can learn, completely, how to create and sustain a supportive command climate sitting in a classroom or reading it from a book. It is a skill that must be practiced, often, and one that requires continuous feedback and input from subordinates, peers, and superiors. The majority of this work must be done in an operational setting where officers lead and learn from their success and failures. This work, unfortunately, rarely gets done because it is time consuming, is not well understood and, therefore, receives little emphasis. That aside, there is an important component of this that can be taught during institutional schooling.

Our leadership doctrine does a good job of spelling out the elements of a supportive command climate and defining the attributes of an effective leader; but, too often, in an institutional setting, these are treated as nothing more than a list to be study, memorized, and committed to memory. The hope being that if they are known then they can be effectively practiced during operational assignments. Once again, I do not believe that hope is an effective method.

There is so much more that our institutional education system could be doing for our future leaders. When is the last time the Command and General Staff College eliminated a course on tactics to add a course on "Improving Organizational Effectiveness Through Leadership"? Or, when is the last time a course on company level tactics was dropped at a

Career Course in favor of “Building and Sustaining an Effective Command Climate at the Company Level”? I would guess the answer would be “never”. Our institutional education system has always focused on the science of our business and that is not bad. There has to be an education foundation established on how and why we do business the way we do and the institutional education system is the place to do that. All I am advocating is a minor change to that system. That we include more of the “art” side of our business and that the first place we start is with educating our officers to be more effective leaders through a better understanding of a supportive climate and its positive impact on organizational effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

Arguably, the Army is in the beginning stages of what will prove to be a great transformation, in the words of many, a transformation that will guarantee our relevance well into the 21st Century. It is about hardware and software, organizational structure and tactics, but; and more importantly, it is about people and leadership. Soldiers are, and will remain, our greatest asset and our biggest combat multiplier. They deserve the best possible leadership we can provide and to ensure they get it, we must make some fundamental changes to the way we view organizational climate and the way we select and train the senior leaders of the future.

Over the past 20 + years I have often wondered what makes one unit so much better than another. We all get the same quality of new soldiers, NCO’s and Officers; we all operate under the same conditions; we all utilize the same doctrine, tactics, and techniques; and we all operate under the same regulations and procedures. Why then, and often within the same division or brigade, do some units stand out as clearly better? The answer can only be attributed to one factor - good local leadership.

Readiness is an important measure of unit effectiveness but it is not the only important measure. We must begin to recognize and measure the critical contribution a supportive command climate makes toward increased unit readiness. Leaders, at all levels, develop and sustain organizational climate whether it be good or bad. It is time to move beyond our short-sided view of unit readiness and move to something that takes into account the senior tactical leaders ability to create and maintain a supportive, health organizational climate. It is time to hold them accountable for the climate in their unit, the climates they create. Only then will we have units that are “as ready as they can be”.

The first step toward this goal needs to be a better understanding of the interrelationship of culture, climate and organizational effectiveness. We need to develop “the need” to build supportive climates and to do that we need to do a better job of understanding the significant

contribution a supportive climate makes. Only by understanding why climate is so critically important can we get to organizationally developing, measuring, and utilizing it to its fullest extent. Once understood, there are several key steps necessary to organizationally recognize its importance and institutionally recognize the critical role it plays.

First is a more effective use of Command Climate Surveys. Already present in many units, its measurements and utility are varied and haphazard at best. It is time to formalize the process. To create and utilize a standard survey whose results accurately reflect upon a commander's ability to create and sustain a supportive command climate.

Second, it is time to implement some form of 360-degree feedback for leaders at the senior tactical leadership positions and above. The current top-down system remains valuable but only as a key input in the system - it is only one view. In too many cases this system focuses on short-term accomplishments, sometimes at the expense of the long-term health of the organization. The only real way to measure a leader's ability to create and sustain a supportive command climate - to contribute to the long-term health of an organization - is to gain the input of those that work and live inside the unit. It is time to closely examine, implement, and incorporate both peer and subordinate evaluations into our current evaluations system.

Finally, the place to start is the Officer Education System. There is currently an effort to redesign the system at almost all levels. From pre-commissioning to senior service levels, the Army is making a notable effort to redesign the system to account for the leadership challenges of the 21st Century. Most published studies focus on the move to more non-resident time and an increased reliance on distance learning. What is missing, so far, is discussion on content. Within our professional education system, at all levels, let's incorporate some serious discussion on how to build and sustain a supportive command climate. Let's get beyond simply stating that "we need to do it" and send some time discussing why it is important and how to do it. Let's give our future leaders the tools they need to make their units as good as they can be.

Creating and sustaining a supportive command climate is not about a "popularity contest", it is about forming and training units that will be effective in combat. There are many ways to achieve unit effectiveness; some are quantifiable better than others. In 1879 West Point Superintendent General John M. Schofield crafted what is now known as the "Schofield Definition of Discipline":

> The discipline which makes the soldiers of a free country reliable in battle is not to be gained by harsh or tyrannical treatment. On the contrary, such treatment is far more likely to destroy than to make an army. It is possible to impart instructions and give commands in such a manner and such a tone of voice to inspire in the soldier no feeling but an intense desire to obey, while the opposite manner and tone of voice cannot fail to excite strong resentment and a desire to

> disobey. The one mode or the other of dealing with subordinates springs from a corresponding spirit in the breast of the commander. He who feels the respect which is due to others cannot fail to inspire in them regard for himself, while he who feels, and hence manifests, disrespect toward others, especially his inferiors, cannot fail to inspire hatred against himself.[18]

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ENDNOTES

[1]"Objective Force Battle Command Concept Paper (Draft)", dated 7 June 2002, found on the Objective Force Compact Disc distributed by the Objective Force Task Force.

[2] ibid

[3] Taken from the thoughts of Tice, Harrison M. and Janice M. Beyer, The Culture of Work Organizations (Pearson Education, 1992), 254-255.

[4] Don M. Snider, "An Uninformed Debate on Military Culture", Orbis, (Winter 1999), 14

[5] From a handout by Walter F. Ulmer for AWC Elective 180, "Creating and Assessing Productive Organizational Climates", 2002, pg 1.

[6] Department of the Army, Army Leadership, Army Field Manual 22-100 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 31 August 1999), 3-12

[7] Ulmer, 2.

[8] The United States Army Infantry School, The Willingness to Sacrifice (Ft. Benning, GA, The United States Infantry School, 1988), 12.

[9] Don M. Snider, 19.

[10] The United States Army Infantry School, The Willingness to Sacrifice, 1.

[11] GEN Creighton Abrams, US Army Poster, no GTA number or date.

[12] FM 22-100, Army Leadership, page 2-21.

[13] FM 22-100, Army Leadership, page 4-2.

[14] Department of the Army, "Army Training and Leader Development Panel Officer study Report to the Army", available from <http://www.army.mil/features/ATLD/report.pdf>; Internet; accessed 12 October 2002. OS-2 & OS-3.

[15] The Center for Strategic and International Studies, "American Military Culture in the Twenty First Century (Washington, D.C. The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2000), 62-64.

[16] The U.S. Army War College, "Study on Military Professionalism" (Carlisle Barracks, PA, The U.S. Army War College, 1970), 30-32.

[17] Ulmer, 4.

[18] John M. Schofield, as quoted in Bugle Notes, Volume 42 (West Point, NY.: United States Military Academy, 1950-51), 206.

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